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General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

13th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 21 September 2011, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Salehi (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Álvaro Colom Caballeros, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Álvaro Colom Caballeros, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Colom Caballeros, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Colom Caballeros (*spoke in Spanish*): I begin by saluting Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, who presides over the current session. His long experience at the United Nations augurs well for our work.

I also acknowledge the outstanding work of Mr. Joseph Deiss of Switzerland, the outgoing President. Our delegation worked very closely with Mr. Deiss, and we can testify to his exceptional commitment to the United Nations and his immense capacity for work.

I also salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. I reiterate our appreciation of his management, and congratulate him on his re-election for a second five-year term. I thank him for the support he has given to my country and Central America, shown especially by his recent visit to Guatemala.

My presence at every General Assembly session during the four years of my presidency testifies to our backing for the United Nations and our gratitude for its support.

This occasion is unique, for two reasons.

First, I can tell the Assembly about the achievements of my Administration over the past four years and also about some pending issues. Secondly, I can report that just 10 days ago the first round of general elections was held in my country, in a calm, normal climate with broad citizen participation, thus consolidating our progress towards a democratic and participatory society.

Let me then start with a few words about the progress made in Guatemala, despite the exceptional obstacles created by the international financial crisis of 2008-2009, a severe political crisis in Guatemala in 2009 that was overcome in compliance with the rule of law and truth revealed by investigations, and the impact of three major natural disasters, which led to a 109-day state of emergency, as well as historical challenges that we face now and shall face in the future.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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I shall sum up in a few words the significance of my period in office, as follows.

First, my Administration gave priority to the individual by dealing with social issues that had not been addressed for 50 years. We have tried to reduce poverty and extreme poverty, with tangible results, especially through our social cohesion programmes, particularly conditional transfers of cash to mothers of extremely poor families — more than 940,000 families.

Second, space was recovered for the State in areas previously dominated corporately by private interests.

Third, we began to contain and reverse a shocking escalation of the criminal violence that had started in earlier periods, by reorganizing the security forces and promoting policies that confronted, instead of coexisting with, organized crime.

Fourth, in accordance with those measures, we recovered whole territories previously dominated by drug traffickers, particularly the Mayan biosphere in the northern Department of Petén, consisting of more than 138,000 hectares; 48,000 head of cattle were expelled from the area, and the Government has retaken control of it. Unprecedented seizures of drugs have taken place. In three and a half years we have seized $12 billion, the equivalent of almost two national budgets. By comparison, over the eight-year period before my Government came to power scarcely $1 billion was seized.

However much we do in the Central American region, Mexico and Colombia, it is essential that drug consumption be controlled. Drug-consuming countries must accept co-responsibility for the daily killings in our countries, and for the uncontrolled sales of arms entering it. They must take co-responsibility for the control of money-laundering and of arms, which bring death to our region, and for the control of factories producing chemical precursors for drug production. Responsibility must be taken for the destination of the products and arms.

We cannot control organized crime in Central America without the support of Mexico and Colombia. We can win the battle only if the consumer markets do their share. We cannot go on shedding blood and being wounded by bullets. That is unfair. The consumer markets must assume true co-responsibility.

Fifth, a series of wide-ranging policies was adopted to gain greater transparency. They included the creation of the Secretariat for Transparency and the adoption of a law on public information.

Sixth, the energy matrix was renewed and upgraded to make it more environmentally sound and to counter the effects of the rising cost of hydrocarbons.

Seventh, we promoted two major economic corridors in poverty-stricken regions. In addition, the construction of the Northern Transversal Strip will unite the Mexican State of Chiapas with our neighbour, Honduras, and Polochic.

Eighth, we pursued a dynamic foreign policy, putting the Central American region on a new footing and making possible a closer understanding with our neighbours of Latin America and the Caribbean. I shall return to this matter a little later.

Ninth, municipal power was given full respect and strengthened, being recognized as a fourth power in the democratic system.

Tenth, the independence of the different branches of the State was faithfully respected.

Finally, while everything that I have described was achieved we preserved and improved a solid, stable macroeconomic system. Guatemala is one of the three countries that had no shrinkage of their economy during the financial crisis.

Some important topics require the participation of every State institution; we need legislation by the Congress of the Republic and rulings by the institutions that constitute the country's judicial system. Among other matters, I wish to refer to the struggle we have waged against impunity, experienced in Guatemala for many years. Seven of the most wanted drug traffickers, who are known to all Guatemalans, are now in jail, awaiting trial. The Government has initiated trials for crimes against humanity committed during our 36-year civil war, which ended in 1996. Sentence has already been passed in some cases, and other trials are continuing.

Here I wish to highlight the crucial role played by the United Nations through the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, a unique United Nations exercise which enjoys the strong support of not only my Government, but also

Guatemalan civil society. We are pleased that the Commission's mandate has been extended for two more years, until September 2013. We recognize the significant achievements it has recorded since its establishment.

Among the main challenges facing us, I wish to mention the following.

First, despite the progress in social matters, we must acknowledge how much remains to be done to eliminate poverty and raise the level of wellbeing of the Guatemalan population. There were many years of neglect, especially of the most vulnerable, such as children, single mothers, and a disproportionate part of the indigenous population.

I am convinced that the actions taken should be institutionalized through social cohesion programmes and presidential programmes. That will require a substantial fiscal transformation to provide the State with the necessary funds. It should be recognized that that is not possible without the support and participation of Congress, even where the Central Government promotes it, as in my case.

In economic matters we need a revival of productive activities in a framework of financial stability and fiscal reform compatible with financing for development.

Secondly, due to our geographical location, Guatemala has become an important transit point for illicit activities, including drug trafficking and human trafficking, both of which are increasingly in the hands of transnational organized crime. We have made strenuous efforts to deal with them and to address the public demand for improved security for every citizen.

It is essential to have regional and international cooperation. Member countries of the Central American Integration System have adopted a historic Central American Security Strategy, which was jointly presented, with the support of the Governments of Colombia and Mexico, to the international community at an international conference held in Guatemala on 22 and 23 June. The main point is that we have acted forcefully, but that it is imperative to implement the 22 projects that need funding.

Here I recall the words of President Calderón of Mexico at the June conference, when he asked what peace there would be in Central America, and Mexico and Colombia, if we were north of Canada; if we simply changed our geographic position we would eliminate the problem of drug trafficking. Once again I stress the co-responsibility of the drug-consuming markets.

Thirdly, it is difficult to promote development when we repeatedly face severe natural disasters, which recently have been occurring at a rate of at least one a year. This can be attributed, at least in part, to climate change, given the high vulnerability of Central America to the effects of this phenomenon. Therefore, it is imperative that humanity close ranks in defence of our common habitat: our planet. So far, progress has been minimal. We urge the international community to redouble efforts to take tangible steps at the next Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Durban, South Africa, in December.

In my previous statements to the Assembly, I have concluded with references to our foreign policy, especially as it affects, or is impacted by, the United Nations agenda.

My Government has developed an active foreign policy, which includes strengthening the integration process in the framework of the Central American Integration System. We are confident that, as part of that active policy, in some three weeks we shall attain one of our main objectives at the multilateral level — Guatemala's election by the General Assembly to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the next biennium. This will renew our commitment to the United Nations, and also strengthen our foreign policy, exposing us to a broad and complex diplomatic agenda. We shall carry out our work with responsibility and independence, and with respect for the principles and values enshrined in the Charter.

I thank our regional group, the Latin American and Caribbean Group, for endorsing our candidature, and I thank all Member States in advance for the support that I trust we shall receive when new members are elected to the Security Council.

The central theme of the session is mediation. I reiterate our full commitment to strengthening preventive diplomacy and the instruments that the United Nations possesses to prevent conflicts. In this context, we can even accept sanctions regimes, provided that they come about as a result of collective decisions taken by the Security Council.

The other side of the coin is that we reject sanctions and coercive measures taken unilaterally. In this regard, we urge the Government of the United States of America to abandon the economic embargo of the Republic of Cuba. We believe that such a step would have many favourable consequences in both countries.

We are following closely, and with hope, the events affecting several countries of North Africa, which will give a greater voice to their peoples. Clearly, it is up to them to decide their own destiny.

But in the midst of the current turbulent situation, it is not possible to delay a solution to the secular conflict resulting from the confrontation between the State of Israel and its neighbours. We support the creation of a viable and prosperous Palestinian State living in peace and harmony, behind secure and defensible borders, side by side with the State of Israel. We understand that the international community can take part in the process of fulfilling that vision, as indeed is happening through the so-called Quartet comprising the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations, but its realization is up to the two parties — Israel and Palestine — and should be achieved through direct negotiations to resolve all outstanding issues.

We reiterate our commitment to the relaunching of the regional integration process of the Central American Integration System to bring about even closer relations with our neighbours of the Caribbean and Latin America, and we enthusiastically support the creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

In another crucial area, we regard as an important step towards resolving our age-old territorial dispute with Belize the signing of the Special Agreement, which, when the domestic juridical processes are concluded, will enable both countries to seek a legal solution through the International Court of Justice. I am pleased to report that the Congress of Guatemala has approved the Agreement unanimously. The next step will be to submit it to a national referendum.

In the ancestral Mayan calendar today is the day of balance, the day of dawn, the day that the Guacamaya sings, announcing the coming of a new dawn. Today we have come together to witness a new dawn. It should be the dawn of peace, the dawn of less poverty, the dawn of harmony and above all the dawn of respect for fundamental human rights.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Álvaro Colom Caballeros, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Wade (*spoke in French*): Senegal welcomes the election of Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser as President of the General Assembly to lead its work at this sixty-sixth session. Therefore, I address to him and his country my warm congratulations. He will have the support of the Senegalese delegation throughout his mandate.

I also extend to the President's predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, our appreciation for all his efforts to revitalize and strengthen the General Assembly so that it may play its role under the Charter.

In addition, I also reiterate to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, my warmest congratulations on everything he has done for the Organization.

I should like to touch on the theme of the session, the role of mediation in the settlement of disputes. The Charter has a number of provisions for the prevention of conflicts and for conflict-resolution. This goal, which was set down in the Charter 66 years ago by the founding fathers, remains, despite evident progress, a long way off. This challenge concerns us, just as it engages our collective and individual responsibility to save current and future generations from the scourge of war.

While the spectre of a major conflict has faded since the end of the Cold War, millions of men and women around the world continue to suffer the disastrous consequences of conflicts old and new.

Peace can be threatened in different ways. It can be threatened when, on the fertile ground of political antagonisms and social, economic and religious conflicts, confrontation gains the upper hand over tolerance, respect and acceptance of our differences.

Peace is also threatened when the legitimate aspirations of peoples to freedom and respect for human rights find in response only indifference and refusal of dialogue, if not systematic repression, as is the case in a number of countries.

Our theme, mediation, is addressed in the Charter, but there are similar notions, such as good offices and negotiations. I would like to contribute something by defining mediation as a mechanism whereby a person, a State or an institution comes between two parties in real or potential conflict and seeks to bring their points of view closer together, with a view to bringing the parties to make concessions and reach a consensus. That can apply to internal conflicts as well as conflicts between States.

I wish to refer to resolution 37/10, of 1982, approving the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes, and the 1988 Declaration on the Prevention and Removal of Disputes and Situations which May Threaten International Peace and Security and on the Role of the United Nations in this Field (resolution 43/51). To these may be added the Agenda for Peace (A/47/277), drafted after the first Security Council summit meeting, held in January 1992, establishing a doctrine of so-called tension-prevention through early warning and preventive diplomacy.

The fact is that by no stretch of the imagination can our Organization alone do everything. We must consider mediation efforts at other levels, such as the regional level. It is a pity that Africa has forgotten an original mechanism often used following independence: meetings between Heads of State at their border to directly address their differences. Unfortunately, this good practice is falling out of fashion, with general international mechanisms being favoured.

In the two categories of mediation — within a country or between countries — we have very rich experiences in West Africa. I shall limit myself to only mentioning them, because some are fairly well known.

For example, with regard to internal conflict, when I was head of an opposition party I personally intervened at the request of Heads of State, who appreciated that I had chosen a democratic internal opposition instead of armed national liberation movements. I often succeeded in bringing together points of view and even in integrating opposition into various Governments, which I did myself later by agreeing to enter the Government of the person who had been my adversary in a number of elections.

I can give the example of Guinea-Bissau, a matter resolved by a trio of Heads of State, of whom I was one, which decided to travel to the country, which was in conflict with the army. Order was successfully re-established. The countries concerned were Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. More recently there was the Ivorian crisis, which ended happily thanks to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), supported by the United Nations and France.

I could add the normalization of the situation in Niger and Guinea-Conakry through the mediation of ECOWAS, which succeeded despite difficulties in establishing an elected Government. I can also cite the peaceful declaration of independence of the State of South Sudan. I commend the representative of that brother country here at the United Nations.

There are of course other cases. The examples I have given were just to show that at the regional level many conflicts can be settled directly by States, sometimes with the assistance of an outside country, such as France, or with the assistance of the United Nations.

To conclude that list of countries, I want to say that just a few days ago, as there is a threat of trouble on the border between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, the President of ECOWAS convened a small group of neighbouring countries, and we were able, with the help of the United Nations, to establish a mechanism to prevent the intervention of mercenaries in Côte d'Ivoire who were seeking to enter Liberia to destabilize the country during election time.

Sadly, despite those successes, there are other potential conflicts, such as that which is harming relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and the potential conflict in Darfur.

I turn to mediation used in conflicts between States. I shall take just one example: Palestine and the State of Israel. I commend all the efforts made over many years to bring the two parties closer together, which unfortunately have not yet succeeded. So this year we have an application by Palestine to the General Assembly for recognition as a Member State of the United Nations. There is no doubt about Senegal's support for the application; it is the consequence of what has been our policy for a long time, particularly as today Senegal is Chairman of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Senegal supports an independent Palestinian State within internationally recognized borders as well as the existence of the State of Israel, each within its own borders. It will not be easy to achieve that, but the international community will do its very best.

I take this opportunity to make a clarification, because, despite my proximity to the Arab countries and to the Palestinians, a few days ago a statement was made about my playing the role of mediator in the Israel-Palestine conflict. President Netanyahu's understanding was mistaken. I have never been a mediator in the Palestine-Israel conflict and have never sought to be a mediator. Moreover, we need to do much more than to call one country or one person to mediate in such a complicated situation.

All goodwill is needed for a solution. Having been awarded the Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize, I must honour that distinction, so wherever I can intervene to find solutions I do so, on my own responsibility. I intervened personally for the release of a young soldier, Gilad Shalit, a few years ago.

Unfortunately, that was not successful, but on the basis of a number of suggestions I took the initiative once again some days ago. That seems to have had a reaction, in the light of what President Netanyahu said. He said that he did not want mediation by Senegal, and that Senegal was an ally of Palestine. But he was wrong. I do not do mediation; I provide good offices; I take it on my own responsibility to help release one young man when I believe that that young man should be elsewhere other than a prison and when I think that I can convince the parties — above all, the Palestinian parties, the current Government of Palestine, Hamas — of the need to release that young man for humanitarian reasons.

If I succeed, excellent; if I fail, it will not stop me from starting over again. I will do that regardless of the position of the two parties — in other words, regardless of the position of Israel and of the position of Hamas. That is consistent with my philosophy of peace and the choice that I have made to contribute to extending cooperation where I can.

I believe that fear and mistrust, which persist between Israel and Palestine, could be mitigated — this is a simple suggestion that I make to our Secretary-General — by establishing a committee of three States chosen by the two parties. Those States would hold discussions to discover what guarantees are demanded by each party to commit to the path of negotiation for the existence of two States, the State of Israel and the State of Palestine, because at present, I believe, there is no dialogue, indirect or direct. I believe that my suggestion could facilitate understanding of the positions on both sides and could help mitigate fears and concerns that are major psychological barriers to discussion and to any agreement.

Maybe I am wrong. Maybe this will not end in anything, but it costs nothing to try. I say to the Secretary-General: "Before you reply 'No', I want you to consider my proposal for 40 days. If after that time you think that it cannot help solve the problem, you can say so. But I beg you to try to understand the proposal." I am ready to go into further details, even in a document. I have established this position, which could ultimately be fine-tuned using other people's contributions.

As I come to the end of my address I want to touch on Security Council reform. The topic has kept returning in a cyclical fashion for 18 years, and we have made no progress, due to great confusion.

The current Security Council system has certain advantages. A Security Council, an international order, must exist, but it must be improved. But in its current functioning the Security Council has a fundamental role, which is to ignore the African continent. Even on recent issues, such as Libya, Africa has no permanent seat with a right of veto.

I will not speak of general reform of the Security Council. I know that it will not happen overnight. But I also know that since its creation there has been a need to increase the number of seats, and there needs to be a better distribution.

I call for the remedying of a historic injustice to Africa. Seventy per cent of the issues on the Security Council agenda are African questions, and Africa is absent, even on the question of Libya. Libya is an African country. Therefore, it would be good to have an African country with a permanent seat on the Security Council with a right to the veto. I am not talking about a non-permanent seat; it must be permanent.

We have made progress, because when a few years ago I had discussions with members of the Council the majority thought that the idea was reasonable, if it could be detached from more general demands. But each time we bring it up it is a case of one step forward, two steps back. But we should not be discouraged.

I come to my last point: the environment and the agricultural crisis. These are also issues of peace, because the environment is linked to climate change affecting particularly the developing countries, and above all Africa.

A few years ago a French philosopher wrote a famous work, "*L'Afrique, terre qui meurt*", in which he spoke of savannization and desertification, problems that my own country suffers from. In the Sahel I find that those words are particularly well based.

Above all, coastal erosion is accelerating. From Morocco to the Gulf of Guinea seawater is filtering through layers of the continental shelf deep into the continent — 480 kilometres — salinizating the water table, with the result that the population is suffering an increasing lack of drinking water.

Marine erosion does not just mean that the coast is being eroded by the sea. It is destroying land in the interior, and making populations emigrate towards areas where they can find potable water. It is historically one of the main mechanisms of desertification. Sometimes whole populations are forced to go elsewhere.

But we are not standing idly by. That is why we have created the Great Green Wall, extending from Dakar to Djibouti, 7,000 kilometres long and 15 kilometres wide. That is why we called on the EU to finance a study with European and African experts to find a solution to the infiltration of marine waters into the continental shelf.

We have built part of the Atlantic wall in Senegal, but only two kilometres, because one kilometre costs a great deal of money — $2 million. In depth it is to go as far as the granite plateau, at which point it can go no further. We do not want to take it too far, because in environmental matters it is important before doing anything to find out what the consequences elsewhere will be.

That is why we need to analyse the matter in an entirely scientific way, since the forces of the sea that are stopped have not been negated; they are diverted by the sand and liquids. The experts can clarify the situation and help us, with full knowledge of the facts, use our resources to end this degradation, which, sadly, is leading to the disappearance of a large part of our continent. The tsunami is not just the effect of huge waves on a coast. It is also destruction that happens within our continent. I wanted to mention that phenomenon to draw attention to the great dangers threatening Africa.

Finally, we recently held the second International Dakar Agricultural Forum to consider the rise in agriculture prices, from which even producing countries are suffering, like us, because we are also big consumers. The participants proposed the establishment of an organization for global agricultural governance. We urge that the headquarters of such an important institution be in Africa, and not in a developed country. There is no major organization of its kind with its headquarters in Africa. The organizations that are helping us need to be with us on the ground.

The role of the proposed organization would be to regulate the prices of agricultural products and ensure a minimum income for small farmers. I commend our draft resolution on the matter. The policy of the organization could be to play a role in reducing productivity differentials. Why is productivity higher in the United States and Europe than in Africa — for example, in Zimbabwe? We need to ask the question and find solutions.

In Senegal, we have addressed the issue with a plan that we call the Grand Agricultural Offensive for Food and Abundance to deal with the productivity

differentials between Senegal and certain Italian regions. It has allowed us to move from being, in 2007, dependent on others for food to the status of a country that has achieved food self-sufficiency. This year we may even be able to begin exporting, which is a remarkable achievement.

I must say that we have been helped by chance, since fertilizer constitutes at least 30 per cent of costs, and our fertilizer can be used directly, without any preparation. Moreover, friendly countries helped us acquire important equipment on very favourable conditions over a long term.

The scope and complexity of the Organization's tasks put in perspective its successes and its setbacks. But what determines our commitment to the institution, what gives hope to the peoples that we represent here, what definitively gives them trust and faith in the Organization, is the feeling that when it deliberates, when it decides and when it acts, it observes without discrimination the principles enshrined in the Charter: universality, legality, justice and impartiality.

Finally, the extent to which those values are safeguarded is the measure of the legitimacy and success of our Organization's interventions.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Senegal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Armando Emílio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Armando Emílio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Armando Emílio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Guebuza (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): We join previous speakers in congratulating Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, of Qatar, on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. His long diplomatic experience makes us anticipate that our deliberations will be crowned with success. We take this opportunity to assure him our full readiness to contribute to the success of this session, and wish him well in the discharge of his duties.

We extend our congratulations to the President's predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss of the Swiss Confederation, on his commitment, pragmatism and dynamism in the conduct of the work of the sixty-fifth session.

We also congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his reappointment to the post of Secretary-General, which demonstrates the recognition of Member States, and of the international community as a whole, of his commitment to the pursuit and consolidation of peace, security and international development. We are encouraged that, thanks to his full commitment, we will continue to work together, under the aegis of the United Nations, to find appropriate solutions to common problems facing humanity.

We welcome the newest Member of the United Nations, the Republic of South Sudan. With this sister country, we celebrated its independence and at that time expressed our congratulations on this important milestone.

This session takes place at a critical stage of human history, characterized in particular by the impact of the ongoing global financial and economic crisis; the rising prices of food and oil; the resurgence of hotbeds of tension and political instability, particularly in North Africa and the Middle East; the prevalence of pandemics such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS; and the increasing occurrence of natural disasters. These challenges require a multilateral approach in order to find consensual, effective and sustainable responses.

Indeed, the negative impact of these complex phenomena, especially in developing countries, is a potential factor of political and social instability. It is therefore necessary to focus on democratic principles grounded on dialogue, inclusive governance, accountability and transparency and respect for human rights.

In this context, we commend the choice of theme for the session: the role and importance of mediation for the prevention of violent conflicts, for the pursuit of peaceful solutions and for the strengthening and consolidation of mutual trust. Those are key factors for building a solid and lasting peace.

We all yearn for a better world in which peace and security, harmony and concord reign, a world in which everyone's concern is to combat poverty, fight against epidemics and promote the welfare and prosperity of humankind.

The proliferation of crises and the perpetuation of dissonant positions, rather than a search for solutions to the many problems that affect all humanity, make this dream become increasingly difficult to achieve. Therefore, strengthening multilateralism and global governance by the United Nations is of critical importance.

This session takes place in the year in which the United Nations family recalls the fiftieth anniversary of the physical disappearance of Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. It is also 25 years since the assassination, by apartheid, of our late President Samora Moisés Machel. Those two personalities were lovers and defenders of peace, and they lost their lives when seeking peace for countries of our Mother Africa. In honour of those great names and all those who gave their lives to mediation and preventive diplomacy as a means for the peaceful settlement of disputes, let us all reaffirm our commitment to peace, and redouble our commitment in support of initiatives aimed at building a world free of conflict.

Mediation should be seen as an opportunity to bring together the parties to a dispute, reduce their differences and appeal to conscience so that together they can move towards mutually acceptable peaceful solutions. Mediation cannot be started with the assumption that we have all the answers; the mediation process should be conducted in an objective, impartial and neutral manner, ensuring the involvement of stakeholders at all stages and their ownership of the process. These are basic principles that ensure the continuity and consolidation of the process of national reconciliation and reconstruction, and, more important, the building of mutual trust.

Aware of these principles, Mozambique is proud to be part of some positive experiences in different mediation processes in southern Africa and the African continent as a whole. We have thus contributed to helping other countries to return to the path leading to social and economic development. We therefore appeal for appreciation of the mediation role of the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations.

The universality of the United Nations gives it a key role in promoting international peace and security by resorting to peaceful means to settle disputes. In this sense, the Organization is once again called upon to assume the responsibility entrusted to it in the Charter as a facilitator of mediation within the concert of nations, through its organs, in particular the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as through the Peacebuilding Commission.

We praise the progress made by the United Nations, whose impact on prevention, mitigation and mediation of internal and inter-State conflicts has been positive. These achievements can be consolidated by strengthening the relationship between the principal organs of the United Nations with a mandate to safeguard international peace and security, as well as their relationship with regional and subregional organizations.

We reaffirm our recognition of the role of the regional and subregional organizations as pillars in the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and stability through the use of preventive diplomacy and early warning systems.

The African experience has proved that the various regional and subregional mediation initiatives have been effective in preventing and managing conflicts and tensions, and in maintaining regional peace and stability. In this context, we salute the signature of the political road map leading to the return to constitutional order in Madagascar, the culmination of a negotiating process, mediated by the Southern African Development Community, which started in August 2009.

The United Nations remains the appropriate forum for addressing current challenges, including the peaceful resolution of disputes. However, in order to assume its role effectively, our Organization must complete the ongoing reforms.

In this sense, we reiterate the commitment of the Republic of Mozambique to continue to provide relevant input to the reform process, which helps the United Nations to become more proactive and effective

in dealing with global issues, thus contributing to the consolidation of its credibility and legitimacy, in the interests of the peoples of the world. In this regard, we reiterate our interest in seeing the conclusion of the process of revitalization of the role and authority of the General Assembly as a more representative and legitimate body of the United Nations.

It is in this Assembly, where we are all represented and where every vote counts, that the most important decisions on the international agenda, including the peaceful and negotiated settlement of disputes, should be taken and evaluated. Only a strong General Assembly, endowed with the necessary authority and competence and adequate resources, would be up to these responsibilities and current challenges.

Another important component of reform that continues to deserve our attention is the Security Council. This body should, in a transparent, inclusive and democratic manner, follow the evolution and dynamics of contemporary global challenges and assume its vital role in building the credibility of the United Nations as a universal entity. We are confident that these reforms will allow greater dialogue and cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council, strengthening the relationship with each other and with relevant regional and subregional organizations.

We have been following with due attention the social and political developments in North Africa and the Middle East. We recognize that these developments pose a challenge for the countries and regions concerned and also for the international community. We are hopeful that the processes in progress will capitalize on opportunities to promote peace, expand freedoms, promote development and improve living conditions. We call upon all relevant actors to engage in constructive dialogue and work for peaceful solutions to ensure peace and stability.

From those developments we have learned the lesson that internal dialogue, regional cooperation, and fairness in the interventions of the United Nations should be privileged.

We note with concern the lack of progress in the Israeli-Arab peace process. In this context, we urge the parties to commit themselves to relaunching negotiations that are translated into concrete actions with a view to a lasting, comprehensive and fair conflict solution. We reiterate our unequivocal support for the cause of the Palestinian people, who have been denied the inalienable right to self-determination.

We reaffirm our support for the principle of the creation of two States, Palestine and Israel, coexisting peacefully and in accordance with the 1967 borders. We also reiterate our support for the commitment of the international community to finding a sustainable solution in favour of the people of Western Sahara. We also reiterate our support for their legitimate right to self-determination.

We take this opportunity to express our solidarity with the brotherly peoples of Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya, plagued by severe drought and famine. We praise the efforts that the international community has made so far to alleviate the suffering and loss of life.

Finally, we reaffirm the continued engagement and commitment of the Republic of Mozambique to peace, security and stability.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Mozambique for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Armando Emílio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morales Ayma (*spoke in Spanish*): Being present at this forum is very important to express what we think, what we feel and what we work on, but it is also important to express major differences between Presidents and between Governments, our differences on policies, programmes, projects,

principles and values with some countries in this world.

This morning we heard the statements of some Presidents, and I realized that there are enormous differences between the so-called small countries, developing countries, underdeveloped countries, compared with some Powers. For example, in the debate here at the United Nations there is a clear difference between the culture of life and the culture of death, between truth and falsehood and between peace and war.

Of course, we all have the right to have our differences. We have a right to deep differences about life, but I believe that our Organization, the United Nations, has a duty to make it possible to align the constant work of Governments to guarantee peace and the equality and dignity of all those living on plant Earth.

When I say that there is a deep difference between the culture of life and the culture of death, I feel that it will be difficult for us to come to an understanding with economic policies that concentrate capital in the hands of a few. Data show that 1 per cent of the world's population holds 50 per cent of its wealth. If there are such deep differences, how can we resolve the problem of poverty? And if we cannot put an end to poverty how can we guarantee lasting peace?

Furthermore, imperialism seeks to control the sources of energy throughout the world, and to that end it has instruments to impose, control and constantly invade. And it is not just now; it has always been so. I remember when I was a child seeing rebellions of peoples against the capitalist system, against economic models that involved the permanent pillaging of our natural resources. Left-leaning union leaders and political leaders were accused of being Communists in order to arrest them. There was military intervention against social forces. People were confined, exiled, killed, persecuted and jailed, accused of being socialists, Maoists, Leninists and Marxist-Leninists.

I feel that that has ended. We are no longer accused of being Marxists or Leninists, but now drug-trafficking and terrorism are given as excuses. In countries with many natural resources, particularly related to energy, we are threatened by foreign intervention, when Presidents, Governments and peoples are not pro-capitalist or pro-imperialist.

And then there is talk about a lasting peace. How can there be a lasting peace where there are United States military bases? How can there be lasting peace when there are military interventions?

I believe that our United Nations is subordinate to the Security Council. What is the use of the United Nations if a group of countries decides on interventions, on killings? It is a Security Council for whom? It is a Security Council for Presidents, Governments, peoples who are pro-imperialist or pro-capitalist. But it is the Insecurity Council for Presidents, peoples or Governments who seek liberation — not only cultural liberation, but also economic liberation: the recovery of their economic resources. Those are the deep divisions between the Presidents from the various continents who are taking part in our debates.

If we want the Organization to have the authority to see that its resolutions are respected, we should think of founding afresh the United Nations. We cannot continue on the current footing.

Why do I say that? Every year at the United Nations, almost 100 per cent of the Member States — the United States and Israel being the exceptions — decide that the economic blockade of Cuba should be ended. Who ensures that that decision is respected? The Security Council will never ensure that such United Nations resolutions are respected; the United Nations cannot ensure respect for that decision of the whole world to lift the blockade against Cuba.

I cannot understand how the resolutions of an Organization of all the countries of the world are not respected. What, then, is the United Nations? It is time for an in-depth debate on founding afresh this great Organization, the largest in the world. We should debate its role so that the United Nations is recognized and respected by the peoples of the world. That can happen only with the re-establishment of the United Nations as a body which fights for the equality of all the inhabitants of planet Earth, for the dignity of all those whom we represent at the United Nations.

I have heard a number of interventions about Palestine. Of course, Palestine has our full support. Bolivia not only supports recognition of Palestine at the United Nations, but also wishes to welcome Palestine to the United Nations. Here I have a profound observation. When Israel bombs, attacks, kills and takes Palestinian land, there is no Security Council for

that, there is no international organization that can stop those bombings and killings, the genocide in Palestine.

When there was a coup d'état in Honduras, where were the military bases to defend a President elected by the Honduran people? Where was the Security Council or the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to defend democracy in Honduras?

It is time for us to think deeply about this. When there are anti-imperialist Presidents with anti-capitalist Governments, the empire tries to create internal conflicts with what appear to be major confrontations, making it appear in the media that a certain President should fall, or it tries to divide a country to justify intervention.

When there was a coup d'état in Honduras and there were killings in Palestine, where was NATO? Where was the Security Council? They were nowhere to be found.

For those and many other reasons, it is important to think again about re-establishing the United Nations.

How can we Presidents and Governments face our responsibility of freeing our countries? Let me speak of some important aspects of my experience as President.

First, our natural resources can never be privatized. They can never be handed over to transnational companies, whether they be minerals, oil or other natural resources. Before I became President, hydrocarbons were in the hands of transnational companies. What did the contracts say? They declared that the owner assumed the right of ownership at the mouth of the well. Governments told us that as long as the resource — gas, oil — was underground it belonged to all Bolivians, but the minute it came out of the ground it belonged instead to the transnational companies. In the contracts they concocted the idea that the contract holder acquired ownership at the mouth of the well; as soon as the oil and gas came out of the ground they no longer belonged to Bolivians. That was a constant pillaging of our natural resources.

On 1 May 2006, we nationalized and recovered our natural resources through a supreme decree. From then on our national economy began to change. From then on Bolivia stopped being a beggar State. Before 2006 — I say this very sincerely — Bolivia was a small country sometimes considered an underdeveloped or developing country, it does not matter what term is used.

We have just 10 million inhabitants. Investment in Bolivia in 2005 was only $600 million, and more than 50 per cent of it was credits or international cooperation. Less than 50 per cent consisted of our own resources. How much investment has there been this year? The answer is $3.6 billion, with 20 per cent or 30 per cent of that being through international cooperation or credits, while almost 80 per cent is our own resources, thanks to our recovery of hydrocarbons, gas. How our economy has changed!

From 1948 until 2005 Bolivia never had a fiscal surplus; it was in deficit. In our first year in charge — 2006 — we achieved a fiscal surplus. We also created bonds for children and the elderly. We started to democratize our economy, apart from increasing investment. For the 180 years after Bolivia was founded in 1825, what international reserves did we have until 2005? The answer is $1.7 billion. Over 180 years, Governments of all kinds — liberal, military dictatorships, neo-liberal — were able to save for Bolivia only $1.7 billion. In less than six years we have saved over $10 billion; Bolivia now has $11.7 billion in international reserves.

In 2005, we were the next to last country in terms of international reserves. Now we have improved, thanks to the recovery and nationalization of hydrocarbons. Recovering natural resources, having them in the hands of the State, is very important for improving the economy; we cannot privatize natural resources and hand them over to the transnationals.

We can have partners. That is fine. But companies cannot be the owners of our natural resources. The State, the people, must be the owner. I mention this experience because thanks to our decision, responding to the call of the Bolivian people, we started to change the national economy.

I have a second point. Basic public services can never be provided by private businesses. I am speaking of water, energy, electricity and the telephone service. This morning, someone said that the prices of agricultural products are rising by 25 per cent or 30 per cent — even 50 per cent in some cases — and have been doing so for four or five years. Prices are going up because we do not yet control agricultural production. Since the State has controlled basic services in Bolivia, electricity, telephone and drinking

water tariffs have not risen, because they are basic. Public utilities must be the responsibility of the State, and not of the private sector.

How can we allow water, the stuff of life, to be in private hands? I welcome the support we have received from the General Assembly for water to be a human right and express thanks on behalf of the people and Government of Bolivia. It is our responsibility to implement throughout the world the concept of water as a human right, thus supporting the least privileged when it comes to water.

My third point concerns the constant struggle of peoples for dignity and sovereignty. In Bolivia I too have to put up with a United States military base. And what do the uniformed United States outsiders do? They command the national police and the armed forces, because of political decisions of former Presidents, those who preceded me in the *Palacio Quemada*, as it is known in some sectors of society. The Chimore airport could not be used without the permission of the United States embassy. That woke us up to the importance of defending the dignity and sovereignty of our peoples.

What I have described gave rise to a great movement, not only social and cultural, but also electoral. It led to a political liberation movement, a movement to return dignity to all Bolivians, and to my attaining the presidency.

When I became President, I closed the military base. How is it possible in this new millennium, in the twenty-first century, for there still to be foreign military bases all around the world? How is it possible for there still to be interventions decided upon by the Security Council? That situation is a threat to humanity, an attack on the dignity of all the countries of the world. That is why we must develop proposals for the United Nations that will make it possible not only to free all the people living on this planet, but to restore dignity to them.

My fourth point concerns international financial institutions. I remember that when I was a union leader Governments could never obtain the resources for investment. We were told that Bolivia did not have the capacity to borrow. Bolivia did not have easy access to international loans. But what did the International Monetary Fund do? It made loans conditional. It told Governments that if they privatized refineries and telecommunications they would give credits of $30 million to $40 million.

A usurious bank, conditional credits and credits requiring security are no solution. No credits were given to States, or to the productive sector. They were all for services and trade. Above all, they went to the transnationals.

When I became President, one of the transnational oil companies told me that the Government would have to guarantee a credit of $100 million to build a pipeline. I wondered about the purpose. Finally, the oil company, Transredes, was conspiring politically, and we therefore decided to nationalize its properties — oil and gas pipelines. We expelled it. Then we began to invest through the State company, Yacimientos, without borrowing a single dollar, and the Carrasco Cochabamba pipeline is now under construction. But if the transnational had continued to be responsible, we would certainly have had to guarantee a loan for it.

As the Assembly is aware, I come from the indigenous peasant movement. When our families talk about a company, they think of it as something that has a lot of money and is made up of millionaires. So I could not understand how a company could ask the Government to lend it money for an investment.

The international financial institutions deal through companies, but who has to pay? It is the peoples, the States. So we must create other financial institutions. Fortunately, we are making good progress in South America. The Bank of the South will be completely different from the usurious banks that feather their own nests and make money through speculation. That must end. Regional integration will free us from the domination of those banks.

It is important for us to go further in that integration. In Bolivia we have barriers to overcome, and other countries of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) also have problems. For example, we have a historic demand upon Chile for a sovereign corridor to the Pacific. We decided to have recourse to international tribunals to ask for that access. Resolution 37/10 of 15 November 1982 establishes in its annex, the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes, that recourse to an international tribunal to settle disputes between States should not be considered an unfriendly act.

Bolivia has right and reason on its side in going to an international tribunal, because our landlocked state results from an unjust war, an invasion. For Bolivia, calling for a solution in the international sphere means for Bolivia redressing a historic injustice.

Bolivia is a friendly, peaceful State which gives priority to dialogue with its neighbours. We therefore keep open channels for bilateral negotiation with Chile, without, however, renouncing the right to go to an international court. There is regional involvement as well, since this is not just a bilateral problem, but is a regional problem as well.

Peoples are not responsible for the landlocked state of Bolivia. Those responsible are, as always, the oligarchies, the transnationals, which wish to protect their access to natural resources. The 1904 Treaty did not lead to either peace or friendship, because for more than a century Bolivia had no access to a sovereign port of its own. I take this opportunity to call on the United Nations, other international organizations and especially the region to support us, so that we can return with sovereignty to the Pacific Ocean.

In addition, there is another movement of countries taking place, that of the countries of Latin America with the Caribbean. I would say that it is a new Organization of American States, without the United States, in order to free us of certain impositions, with the benefit of our experience in UNASUR. I say that because we no longer find ourselves obliged, when there are conflicts between countries and within democracies, to have somebody coming from outside and above to re-establish order. Presidents and Governments meet to resolve internal problems. This is a great liberation for us.

I also take this opportunity to touch on a central topic: the fight against drug trafficking. United States imperialism is using the war on drugs for political ends. The United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in Bolivia was not fighting drug trafficking; it was controlling it for political purposes. The DEA would implicate union leaders or anti-imperialist political leaders.

Many politicians have been saved from that dirty work of the empire in attempting to implicate us in drug trafficking, which still goes on. Last week some parts of the United States media said that my aircraft had been detained in the United States with traces of cocaine. How false! They are trying to confuse the people, trying to conduct a dirty campaign against my Government and against the State of Bolivia.

What does the United States do? It decertifies Bolivia and Venezuela. What moral authority does it have to certify or decertify nations of Latin America, when the United States is the world's leading drug consumer, when the United States is one of the world's producers of marijuana — in some years the biggest? What authority does it have to certify or decertify any country? This is another way of trying to scare countries or punish them.

However, Bolivia, very responsibly, continues to fight drug trafficking. A report by the State Department recognizes that there has been a net reduction in coca cultivation, with improved interdiction. Where is the market? The market is what drives drug trafficking, and the market is here. Who is decertifying the United States because it has not cut down the market? This morning President Calderón of Mexico said that the drug market continues to grow. Why is no responsibility taken for eliminating the market? As long as there is a market coca leaves and other products will be turned into drugs.

A great responsibility must be borne. Here I make an appeal. Let us fight with shared responsibility. Why do we not put an end to banking confidentiality? The biggest drug traffickers put their millions of dollars not in briefcases or backpacks but in the banks. Why is there fear of banking secrecy? In Bolivia we are not afraid. Banking confidentiality must be ended if we want to fight drug trafficking head on.

One of the crises on the margin of the crisis of capitalism is the food crisis. New international financial structures give opportunities to people with low incomes by providing microcredits to small producers. We have some experience in Bolivia, where credits at zero interest have been given to producers of rice, wheat, corn and soy at zero interest. Food producers can even pay their debts with their products. Soft credits are given to encourage food production.

Yet the international banks never take the small producer into account; they never pay any heed to cooperatives, to associations, which can very well contribute if given the chance.

There are new ways to encourage production through fair trade. We have to put an end to the so-called competitive market. In a competition who

wins? It is the most powerful, those with the greatest advantages. Transnational companies are always the winners. The losers are the small producers, families wanting to rise through their own efforts. Therefore, we are trying in the region to implement policies of complementarity and solidarity, and not of competition. With naked competition we shall never be able to solve the problem of poverty.

Finally on this matter, the crisis of capitalism has no exit. When I was a young boy much mention was made of the foreign debt of poor countries. It was said that it could never be paid. Now the situation is quite the opposite: the debts of the poor countries can easily be settled, but the crisis of capitalism is a bottomless hole. The crisis of capitalism is not just because of circumstances; it is structural.

What do capitalist or imperialist countries do? They seek any pretext to invade a country and make off with its natural resources. This morning the President of the United States said that Iraq was already free and would govern itself. The Iraqis will be able to govern themselves, of course, but in whose hands is the oil now?

The fall of autocracy in Libya was hailed, and now there is democracy, but in whose hands is Libyan oil? The world and the Libyans have come to realize that reason for the invasion and the bombings was not to bring about the fall of Al-Qadhafi by rebels but a desire for Libyan oil. Next year we can review the situation and see which countries have their hands on Libyan oil.

There is a desire to overcome the crisis of capitalism by making off with our oil, gas and other natural resources. But we also have the great responsibility of defending the rights of Mother Earth. I continue to be convinced that the best way to defend human rights is to defend the rights of Mother Earth.

Here we have the great responsibility of looking after the rights of Mother Earth. Only 60 years ago the Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it was only 60 years ago that the United Nations realized that the human being also has rights. After political rights, economic rights, the rights of indigenous peoples, now we have the enormous responsibility of defending the rights of Mother Earth.

We are also convinced that infinite growth on a finite planet is unsustainable and impossible. The limit to growth is the regenerative capacity of the planet's ecosystems. We therefore call for a new 10 commandments concerning social demands, financial systems, natural resources, basic services, production, and dignity and sovereignty. On that basis we should begin to re-establish the United Nations so that it can be the highest instance to settle issues of peace, poverty, dignity and sovereignty.

I hope that my experience as President of Bolivia will be useful to all those present. At the same time, I come to learn from many of them so that I may continue working for the equality and dignity of the Bolivian people.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Türk: I start by congratulating Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly at its current session, on his election, and express our belief that with his wisdom and experience he will guide the Assembly well.

I also express our sincere gratitude to the outgoing President, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for his important contribution to the work of the General Assembly and the United Nations.

Obviously, I wish to pay special tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and to thank him for the vision and dedication with which he works for

the United Nations and for his tireless efforts to promote the spirit of the Charter. We deeply appreciate his leadership and wish him continued success in his second term in office as he guides the United Nations in these challenging times.

Slovenia welcomes the President's decision to put the theme of mediation at the centre of our deliberations at this session. Indeed, no other theme seems more timely at this moment of search for an approach towards a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The European Union, to which Slovenia belongs, is currently fully engaged with high-profile mediation in this context. The mediation under way has two aims.

The first is the revival of the peace process with a view to finding an early solution — a genuine and fair peace agreement involving two States, Israel and Palestine, which would live side by side in peace and security. Secondly, an immediate task relevant to the United Nations is to find an adequate status for Palestine within the ranks of our common, global Organization. Those two aims are genuinely linked, and the latter should be understood as supporting the former.

Our common Organization, the United Nations, is committed to its inclusive character and the universality of its membership. This is the spirit in which we see some of the significant developments of this year.

We welcome the Republic of South Sudan as the newest Member of the United Nations. Our Organization should render every assistance to the new Member in its efforts to establish its structures and to serve the wellbeing of its people.

We also welcome the decision of the General Assembly to grant the seat of Libya to the representatives of the National Transitional Council of Libya. This has established a much needed link between the United Nations and the people of Libya in their effort to build legitimate, democratic and effective institutions and to pursue the path of economic, social and political development, in accordance with the wishes of the people.

Yesterday, at a special High-level Meeting we discussed the forms of assistance in some detail. Today we can say that there is a fair chance of success for effective cooperation between the people of Libya and the United Nations as well as the regional organizations — in particular, the African Union and the Arab League. Together we shall be better able to assist. Slovenia is willing to continue to do its part in this framework.

Political and security concerns are always an important priority for the United Nations. But they have to be considered against the background of other priorities, both long-term and short-term. The Organization has developed its engagements in the most important and the most difficult issues of environment and sustainable development. We need to take resolute steps towards a new and effective system to mitigate the effects of climate change and ensure the necessary adaptation.

We hope that the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Durban later this year, will bring us a step closer to final agreement. The negative impacts of climate change are disproportionate. We should pay particular attention to the unique challenges faced by the small island developing States, whose characteristics make them among the most vulnerable in the world to climate change.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held next year, will be an opportunity to secure renewed political commitment to sustainable development, to assess the progress of implementation of agreed commitments, and to address new and emerging challenges. We should strengthen our efforts to develop a new concept of development that will capture economic growth, social development and environmental protection. It is our duty to make a difference, and making a difference requires a more comprehensive definition of development.

Maintaining our focus on the successful implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, we should pay particular attention to the special needs of Africa, especially those countries most in need. The Istanbul Programme of Action offers concrete solutions for improving progress in the least developed countries.

In times of economic crisis in the donor countries, which seems to continue unabated, increasing aid proves difficult to attain. Improving aid effectiveness is crucial.

There can be no gain in the field of development if other policies, such as trade, agriculture, migration, climate change and so on, cancel out the positive effects of development policies. In this regard, let me convey our hopes for the successful deliberations of the High-level Forum to be held in Busan later this year.

Recent experience in the exercise of development activities has strengthened understanding of the links between development and human rights. The concept of the right to development is gaining in substance and recognition. Moreover, specific development tasks have provided further evidence of the importance of this link. The role of women in development is a pertinent example. Experience and research by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, for example, have shown that empowerment of women in agriculture can reduce hunger by 30 per cent — a very impressive result by any measure.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential to promoting peace, security and above all development. Slovenia strongly supports the work of UN-Women, which will help to significantly boost United Nations efforts to promote gender equality, expand opportunities and tackle discrimination against women around the globe.

Another priority in the field of human rights that Slovenia values highly relates to the rights of the child and to human rights education. This year, as President of the Executive Board of UNICEF, Slovenia worked tirelessly to attain universal ratification of both optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The objective should be to ensure, through United Nations instruments and national action, effective protection of the rights of the child and to improve the wellbeing of children in all parts of the world.

An important segment of this work relates to human rights education, which helps to empower young people in their efforts to secure their rightful place in society. I remember when Slovenia and Costa Rica launched a human rights education campaign in the Third Committee almost 20 years ago. It is gratifying to see that today human rights are increasingly being included in official school curriculums. But there is still much more that we need to do to incorporate human rights learning into societies as a lifelong process. The United Nations, its Human Rights Council and the General Assembly will, I am convinced, continue to make a significant contribution.

I would like to express satisfaction over the adoption of the draft declaration on human rights education and training by the Human Rights Council during its March session this year. I call on all States to support this important declaration, which I am convinced the General Assembly will adopt — hopefully, unanimously — later this autumn.

Human rights concerns are most tragic in the case of humanitarian disasters. The current famine in the Horn of Africa is a sad example. It is a crisis of human existence and human rights. All actors of the international community, including my country, Slovenia, are already trying to help. But more help is needed; humanitarian assistance must expand.

I have briefly referred to some of Slovenia's areas of particular importance, particular engagement and particular activity. Our commitment to the United Nations is strong and will remain strong.

The United Nations is an Organization of all and for all. For almost 20 years now Slovenia has been working as a devoted Member State. We have made proposals for specific action and enjoyed working with all other Member States — large and small, geographically close and geographically distant. We have worked together on specific proposals and decisions and on implementation.

We have also proposed a set of ideas for reform of the Security Council. We hope that the coming year will see more resolute steps in that regard, and that more progress will be made than there has been so far.

The United Nations is an important hope — a hope for the world — and an opportunity for its Member States to bring the reality, complicated and onerous as it may be, closer to our hopes. It is in this spirit that Slovenia has presented its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. We hope for broad support.

If we are elected we shall be a faithful United Nations Member State, aware of the responsibilities of the Security Council and all its members towards the entire Organization and all Member States. We pledge our efforts, our judgement and our sense of fairness as a contribution to the United Nations. And fairness is a

commodity, a principle, a value, that the international community needs most of all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Slovenia for his statement.

Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 8.05 p.m.